

Dealing With Holiday Expectations

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Holidays mean increased expectations. There are expectations to be happy, to feel connected to family, to find “the perfect gift,” to decorate, bake and spend, to send cards, entertain, and eat. It is no wonder stress and tension surround us at this time of year.

Think about your response to the following questions:

What feelings do you associate with the holidays (e.g. enthusiasm, worry)?

- How vulnerable are you to over-spending?
- What is the likelihood that you and your significant other will get into conflict?
- What is the likelihood that there will be conflict in your family of origin?
- How realistic are your expectations for the holidays?
- Do your holiday habits help you cherish the holiday or lead you to negative stress reactions (e.g. anxiety, over-indulgence in alcohol, irritability)?

If your responses indicate the holidays are a difficult time for you, read on:

How Can I Enjoy Holiday Time More?

- Create reasonable expectations for your holidays.
- Eliminate unnecessary activities.
- Consider doing less baking and decorating.
- Stay committed to a reasonable budget.
- Talk with your family about ways to make the holiday less stressful and more enjoyable.

What If I'm Alone For The Holidays?

- Make the day special in some way for yourself (e.g. prepare a special meal, treat yourself to a book, movie, hot bath, etc.).
- Extend an invitation to a friend.
- Volunteer to help those less fortunate.

Now Is The Time To Change

- Think of what you'd like to change this year and what strategies you will use to create that change.
- Consider some of the suggestions above for reducing negative holiday stress.
- Record your plan with specific behaviors, expectations or thoughts you will change.

Make a choice this holiday season to stay focused on the activities and relationships that bring pleasure and meaning into your life. Enjoy the holidays!

The Colorado State Employee Assistance Program (C-SEAP)

is an available resource for employees dealing with difficult emotional issues around the holidays, or anytime.

To make an appointment with a counselor call: 800-821-8154